

Escaping from Insanity

Blurb

“The door opened, people obliviously bustled through. Heart pounding, I stole through the door and fled like a shadow, feet thudding imperatively against the stairs. I ran and ran, lungs burning, perspiring, until I could no longer see the close confines of the mental hospital, until all I recognised was out of sight. I ran until I was completely lost, unaware of the direction.”

I have been homeless, abused and institutionalised. This is my story about fighting back against injustice, madness and shattered dreams. This is my struggle, as I remember it, to re-enter life and society after both were nearly permanently snatched away from me. This is escaping from insanity.

Escaping from Insanity

Threadbare

Carpet, lying there, innocuous, bland,
tell me your secrets, what do you know?

Do you tire of the constant footfall,
wearing you threadbare and pale?

the roar of the vacuum cleaner,
choking on your dust motes

that rise like tiny stars from your weft?

If I could be a carpet, I would hide
from the thudding feet, the hastily wiped
shoes and boots.

If I could be a carpet

I would watch and hold my counsel:

the lovers, caught in their tryst,
the child, smearing sticky jam on the cushion.

I would wrap myself around the cold, angular floor,
smoothing, insulating.

Waiting,

until one day with molten gold pouring
through the window.

Then, with my mind

a fractured, splintered decoration,

I would rip myself from the floor,
swirling orbs of

Escaping from Insanity

circles and pattern and hungrily devour
the sanity of those unwary enough to watch.
Sanity tastes like cheese and cream,
the soured milk of life,
the taste of dairy sour on my tongue,
worm-eaten as an insane world.

Angelic Insomniac

Nurses whirred like the cogs in a well oiled machine.
She was the definition of an insomniac,
slick and well dressed,
lips pursed into a constant thin, angry line.

Escaping from Insanity

Defiant, insidious

in the tightly knit fabric of the psych unit.

I felt that I was that thread that could,
given time, cause the whole material to unravel.

An inconspicuous dark and coarse thread,

the stuff of nightmares

woven into a sparse and bleak pattern

of my wasted years,

my wasted life.

Each second seemed to resonate

and echo back.

The electric lights glared like the mutinous eyes of martyrs,
eyelids peeled back, fleshy orbs peering into nothingness.

I sat and stared awhile as the angel

with her humming wings offered me valium.

It was not a request, I treated it as if it was

The angel's smooth, polished face moved and contorted,
refusing me the right to leave, pushing forward her valium
like a button, that once well stitched with a loop of thread,
would pop me back into sanity.

The whole place seemed to be deep under water,
smoothing and buffeting the angel's still features.

Giving up her valium for later, she left,
the constant mechanical 'tip, tap' of her shoes
on the floor well into the night.

Escaping from Insanity

I seemed to inwardly implode.

I sped away, drowned and floated to the surface
like something that has forgotten the light
and belongs in the murky shadows of night

Cushioned Throne

You sit there, smooth and polished
as a pebble,
your eyes bulging, indecent
in your slip of cotton shorts,
naked flesh on display'

Your eyes are round and black.

Your hair stands on end like porcupine quills.

Jet black.

You shift suddenly, barking your orders.

'clean the kitchen! you shriek, 'Now'

Escaping from Insanity

‘I have homework’, she explains,
‘I have done it’, she insists
Thud, thud. Her head connects with the floor.
Your hands extended into talons.
Fleshy. Flabby. Greasy.
You seem coated in oil, like an Indian meal.
anointed in your familiar stench of takeaways.
Your Grandad, you affirm proudly, was a Nazi.
You have a Percy. Would she like to see?
‘You missed some’ Bang. Head strikes the floor
like a tennis ball, it bounces back, strikes again,
blond fuss. Chequered floor.
You release her
She stares into your fleshy, olive face,
your bulging stomach over the top of your maroon boxers
Like a sleek furnace, sparks flying
from your marble like, piggy eyes.
‘Go to bed early’ you scream nasally, ‘Don’t look at me!’
pitiless, cruel, you return to your cushioned throne.
She awaits the next clouded morning,
sky streaked with child-like fingers of fire.

Fairytale

I am stiff beaten egg-whites.

I am the sea foam, lions lashed into a frenzy.

I am the still hands of a clock, frozen
in my offering of white.

You made me gallop, flung from side to side
like a pendulum.

You paused me in mid-sentence, and left in my arms
a single bud of a baby.

The layers peel away as she grows.

She is fragrant, skin like candle wax.

An inner light glows from her eyes,
blue as the storm tossed sea beneath a clear sky.

Her hair will fade like mist, grow silver as pennies.

My eyes will remain locked, my heart in my throat.

She is my pure fruit, my burning drink, my elixir.

I am hollow as a canoe.

Escaping from Insanity

I am a wooden raft, creaking, splintering

I impaled myself on her mahogany crown.

You watched, jubilant, ready.

You carved me open and stitched her inside

with a fine bronze seam, my frame clanking

like a mysterious metal instrument.

Now, I am un-stitched.

The horse has thrown me off and raced away

with the candle-lit years, in fragments;

But the bud is pale and pure.

The tree is gnarled, and full of levity,

a steel frame of russet and ruby.

Autumn approaches, the days are bitter.

The fruit is touched frost.

A Candlelit Prayer.

Dusk curled like candle light.

Shadows draped over the furniture like velvet ribbons

when I first heard your voice.

It was a faint trickle of honey and excitement,

warm in my mouth,

a bud of golden heat

emanating from my temples.

You were not done.

You whispered that you loved me,

that I could picture myself

in your arms.

I thought that you were dead

that I was in love with a ghost.

I pictured you, silvery like water,

the light shining through you,

moving in ripples, undulating

like a subtly moving serpent.

Years later, in the flesh,

you were warm and strong, tall and lofty

diffident and gentle,

stumbling over your words

with a head of golden brown hair

Escaping from Insanity

that shone like candles at dusk.

Roses

I am cream,

thick, viscous and dusky

as a rose in full bloom/

Escaping from Insanity

My skin tingles like ice crystals,
snowflakes.

The sickness weaves my mind
into a tapestry of ribbons
to bind me within.

I am an effigy.

My skin complains of torments,
whirring wheels,
spindles and sleep.

I love the babe
that nestles like cockles in shells
within the burning shafts

I will sleep now and dream
of dusk sunsets
opening like roses
and a babe
to rest in my arms.

Pearls of Wisdom

You taught me that I was a pearl
simply sitting there, sealed in my shell
would add layers of lustre to my bed,
growing into an ivory orb of new purity.
You taught me that I was a sickness,
locked away from the great and the good
to purge the earth of psychosis,
to create the illusion of life.
You taught me that I was deluded